

Pre-Kindergarten Curricula

A curriculum is a written set of materials that provides an integrated framework to guide decisions adults make about experiences provided for children and includes the following:

- a theoretical, philosophical and/or research basis to guide the approach to nurturing and facilitating children's development
- goals and objectives for children's learning and development that the curriculum seeks to foster
- experiences that will be provided to support diverse learners and facilitate each child's progress toward the expressed goals and objectives (including features of the physical environment, scheduling, specific experiences, and adult-child interactions)
- a process through which adults will plan and implement experiences to facilitate each child's progress toward the goals and objectives, including avenues for collaboration with families and members of the larger community to guide decisions made about children's experiences
- a means to assure that the environment, activities and interactions children experience are appropriate for individual children by collecting on-going information on individual children that is used to gauge how each child is making progress toward the curriculum's stated goals and objectives.

NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE APPROVED PRE-KINDERGARTEN CURRICULA

This list has been approved by the North Carolina State Board of Education and the North Carolina Division of Child Development (DCD). The list is the result of a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum review process conducted by a panel of experts in 2007-08. *This list does not constitute an endorsement of any program using the curriculum.*

- **The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, 4th Edition** | Teaching Strategies, Copyright 2002
<http://www.teachingstrategies.com>
- **The Empowered Child™, Childtime, 2nd Edition** | Copyright 2007 | <http://www.childtime.com/education.aspx>
Approved for use in Childtime programs.
- **Explorations with Young Children: A Curriculum Guide from the Bank Street College of Education Gryphon House, Copyright 1992** | <http://www.gryphonhouse.com>
- **HighScope Preschool Curriculum** | HighScope Press, Copyright 2002 | <http://www.highscope.org>
- **Opening the World of Learning™ (OWL)**
Pearson Early Learning, Copyright 2005
<http://www.pearsonschool.com>
Approved with the stipulation that full-year programs have a plan to supplement or extend the curriculum, since OWL is designed to cover a school year.
- **Passports: Experiences for Pre-K Success**
HighReach Learning, Copyright 2007
<http://www.highreach.com>
Approved with the stipulation that programs purchase the Compass and at least one set of study/theme materials.
- **Tutor Time LifeSmart™** | Copyright 2005
<http://www.tutortime.com/curriculum.aspx>
Approved for use in Tutor Time programs.





CRITERIA FOR CURRICULUM APPROVAL

The curriculum review panel defined and used the following criteria to review and recommend these curriculums:

- 1) **Evidence based:** The curriculum must articulate a theoretical and/or research-base for the approach and clearly demonstrate how the curriculum utilizes the theory and/or research as a basis for making decisions about experiences provided for children. The curriculum may also have empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum collected with sound research methodology.
- 2) **Planning process:** The curriculum must have a process to guide adults in making decisions about experiences provided for children. The curriculum describes the intent or developmental goals of given experiences and the environment. The curriculum includes an on-going process for observing and documenting information related to individual children's level of development, current skills, and interests, and using that information to develop plans. Experiences provided for children should be derived from each child's needs, abilities and interests with appropriate teacher/caregiver input and facilitation. The curriculum should include plans for a variety of types of experiences and activities, including large group, small group, individual, child-initiated, and teacher-initiated activities.
- 3) **Areas of children's development and learning:** The curriculum must include a balance of experiences that address all areas of children's development and learning – physical, social and emotional, approaches toward learning, language and communication, and cognitive development and general knowledge, integrating content areas such as early literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, creative arts, and technology as appropriate for the age of children in the group. Preschool curricula must provide opportunities for children to develop the knowledge, behaviors, and competencies defined in North Carolina's early learning standards.
- 4) **Scheduling and routines:** The curriculum must include a schedule that is age appropriate, predictable but flexible, and responsive to the needs of individual children. The schedule must include an appropriate balance of teacher/caregiver initiated and child-initiated experiences, and large blocks of time for play and exploration with appropriate facilitation from the adult. Routines such as feeding and toileting should be age appropriate and included as an integral part of children's experiences.
- 5) **Physical environment:** The curriculum must provide appropriate guidance for teachers and caregivers on the physical environment, including guidance on room/home space arrangement, furnishings, equipment, and other aspects of the physical environment that reflects an understanding of child development and supports children's learning and development.

- 6) **Social environment:** The curriculum must provide appropriate guidance on how teachers/caregivers can facilitate children's social-emotional development, including guidance on adult-child interactions, promoting children's peer relationships, and managing children's behavior.
- 7) **Materials and experiences:** The materials and experiences used in the curriculum must be appropriate for the age and developmental level of children targeted and should include both child-directed and teacher/caregiver-directed activities. They should be engaging for children, play-based, and present concepts that are concrete and relevant to children's everyday experiences. The materials and experiences should be flexible enough to promote each child's development and learning in both indoor and outdoor settings, and provide a variety of experiences that support children in making choices, exploring and demonstrating independence. Materials and experiences must be free of bias, violent and otherwise unacceptable content.
- 8) **Diversity:** The curriculum should support the development and learning of children from diverse backgrounds and explicitly address how adults can provide experiences that are culturally relevant and sensitive for children and families who reflect a variety of cultures, languages, socio-economic status, and structures.
- 9) **Inclusion of children with diverse developmental/ability levels:** The curriculum should include provisions for modifications/adaptations as appropriate to include children with varying developmental/ability levels, including children with disabilities, children who speak languages other than English, gifted children, etc.
- 10) **Family involvement:** The curriculum must include a plan for how teachers/caregivers will collaborate with families in a shared decision-making process and promote two-way communication between teachers/caregivers and families. Collaboration with families should be an integral part of the curriculum at the classroom/group level, and families should be included as collaborators in planning individualized experiences for their own children.
- 11) **Implementation guides:** Curricula must provide adequate and appropriate explanatory materials for adults to support implementation of the curriculum. The materials should include guidance on how to set up the environment, how to plan individualized and group instruction, how to implement activities, and how to interact with children. The curriculum may include resources or tools that facilitate teacher/caregivers' ability to assess the extent to which they are implementing the curriculum as it is designed.

CURRICULUM TRAINING

Training in the appropriate use of the selected curriculum should be a part of initial staff development in pre-kindergarten programs for all teaching staff who have not previously completed appropriate training. Further, ongoing professional development should support effective implementation of the selected curriculum.

"SPECIALS" IN PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Through the use of an approved, comprehensive pre-kindergarten curriculum, teachers incorporate the visual arts, music and movement, dramatics, opportunities for gross and fine motor development, and the appropriate use of technology throughout the school day. If it is decided locally that pre-kindergarten children will have access to specialists who offer

such experiences, there are appropriate ways to accomplish this without transitioning children out of the pre-kindergarten classroom and into a separate setting. The number and duration of transitions throughout the school day should be minimized for pre-kindergarten children. They need extended periods of uninterrupted time to explore and engage with their learning environment at a complex level. Transitioning pre-kindergarten children to special classes several times during the week interrupts the daily schedule and can be tiring and distracting for young children.

Instead, the pre-kindergarten teacher can collaborate with the specialists in planning for the incorporation of learning experiences in these curricular areas. In addition, specialists can provide experiences for children in smaller groups within the pre-kindergarten classroom and within the context of a daily schedule that allows for children to make choices.

